

WASHINGTON TIMES
6 September 1985ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 3A

Soviet party official claims relations with U.S. perilous

By Bill Gertz
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

SAN FRANCISCO — A senior Soviet Communist party member, echoing official positions, yesterday said U.S.-Soviet relations are at a "very dangerous stage" that threaten the future of bilateral arms talks.

Georgi Arbatov, director of Moscow's U.S.A.-Canada Institute, made the remarks at a private disarmament conference sponsored by the Institute for Policy Studies.

Marcus Raskin, a co-founder of the leftist think-tank, said the conference was being held because the institute was "displeased with the sorts of discussions that have been going on" between American and Soviet government officials.

At a press conference here yesterday, Mr. Arbatov also defended the Soviet Union's operational anti-satellite system and called the U.S. test of an anti-satellite weapon "an absolutely new generation of anti-satellite weapons."

He said the U.S. test of an ASAT weapon, announced by the Reagan administration last week, would signal a new push in the arms race.

"It means that if you go on with this system you will compel us to recall our unilateral commitment," said Mr. Arbatov, referring to a Soviet announcement Tuesday to abandon a self-imposed three-year halt on testing space weapons.

Mr. Arbatov tried to play down the current Soviet ASAT system as ineffective and "not very dangerous."

"I think it was mothballed," Mr. Arbatov said of the Soviet weapon that can be launched from a ballistic missile, orbit the earth, then track and destroy a satellite.

The United States does not have an operational ASAT system.

Mr. Arbatov dismissed reports that Soviet scientists have been engaged in space-weapons research for decades as "an invention of your people."

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A CIA study last March found that the Soviet Union has been working on laser and atomic particle-beam weapons and leads the United States in some categories of research.

Mr. Arbatov said he was not a Soviet official but a member of the Communist Party Central Committee, which he described as a "parliament."

The Soviet Union's U.S.A.-Canada Institute has been described in congressional testimony as a Communist Party organization nominally linked to the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

As a member of the party's ruling Central Committee, Mr. Arbatov is leading a delegation of 10 Soviet officials, including a former military intelligence officer, on a 20-day tour of five U.S. cities.

IPS, which sponsored the Soviet officials, barred reporters from attending the talks at a San Francisco hotel.

Two years ago a larger IPS "U.S.-Soviet Exchange" in Minnesota was open to the public.

Mr. Raskin, the IPS co-founder who was a National Security Council staff member in the Kennedy administration, said official meetings did not go far enough in examining the "fundamental value assumptions" of the cold war and the arms race. The conference also provides a chance for other Americans to enter the discussions, he said.

Mr. Raskin said the meeting would focus on several areas, including a discussion of "democratic and socialist ideologies," U.S.-Soviet relations in the underdeveloped world and issues relating to the Pacific Basin.

In a 1971 book, "Being and Doing," Mr. Raskin said the United States was viewed as "the world's primary enemy by the poor and the young."

Among the participants listed as attending the meeting are Betty Bumpers of a leftist group called Peace Links; Robert Kaiser, assistant managing editor of The Washington Post; and Adam Hochschild, co-founder of the radical magazine "Mother Jones."